News release

Record-breaking temperatures

6 February 2004

The Central England Temperature (CET) series is one of the most reliable and longest-standing records of temperature in the world. The Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, based in Exeter, has today released figures showing that the recent warm weather has exceeded previous records.

On the night of 3-4 February, the CET minimum temperature was 11.2 °C, beating the previous February figure of 10.3 °C. This series goes back to 1878. The CET for 4 February, reveals a mean temperature of 12.5 °C, beating the previous February record of 12.0 °C from 1960. This series goes back to 1772.
It is particularly remarkable that these records have been broken so early in the month. Generally, temperatures across central and southern parts of the UK were around 8 °C above normal on 4 February 2004.

The main reason for this exceptionally warm weather across southern Britain is the tropical source of the air - it has come from across the Atlantic Ocean, which is unusually warm for February. Figures show sea-surface temperatures around 2-3 °C above normal.

David Parker, Senior Climate Scientist at the Hadley Centre says: "The natural variations of weather patterns often show marked departures from normal. But, because recent studies have shown that most of the global warming observed over the last 50 years is attributed to human influences, it is not unreasonable to conclude that human behaviour has played a significant part in the figures released today."

Notes:

The Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research is one of the leading authorities on climate change and its research is funded by Defra.

The latest UK weather forecasts

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